

The 30 Second Assessment

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Angela Stockman

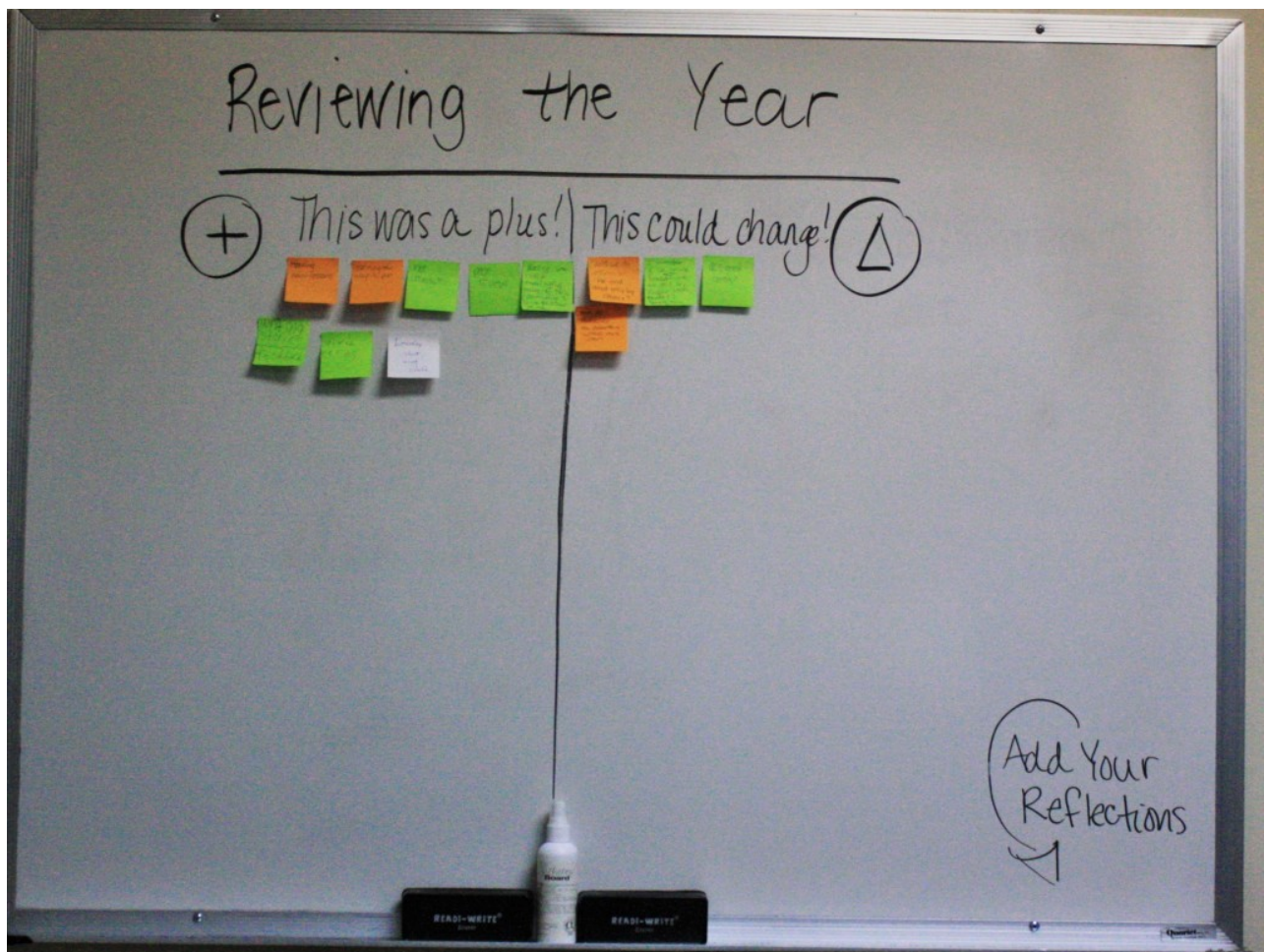
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I know a few teachers this year who are committed to assessing students without testing them. That's right: they're not only ditching grades, they're trying to ditch the tests that produce them too. They're confident that the data they're gathering provides far better information than those tired instruments used to, particularly when it comes to understanding when learning is happening, when it isn't, and why.

They're doing this without adding "one more thing" to their curriculum or extending their preparation time, too. How is this possible? In addition to making learning visible and documenting it in a variety of ways, they've created a toolbox of **30 second assessment strategies**. They're putting these strategies to the test before, during, and after instruction.

You'll find a collection of the most popular strategies below, but know that this isn't a definitive list, and each strategy can and should be adapted to fit your purposes. It's one that teachers are adding to over time, and as they test approaches in their classrooms, they're discovering that some work better than others, depending on their needs.

I'll add this reflection as well: when learners are invited to bring their cell phones into the classroom, they power up the documentation process. Gathering and curating the right data at the right time becomes far more efficient as well.

Of all the work I'm facilitating this year, these projects are my favorite. If you're interested in collaborating with me and the teachers that I support, just drop a line in the comments below or connect with me on Twitter. The more the merrier.

[When learners bring cell phones to class, they power up the documentation process.](#)

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30 Second Assessment Strategies

Tweet at Me: Before they walk out the door, ask your students to shoot you a tweet that states the most important thing they learned that day, one thing they are confused about, or how they know they met the instructional target.

Monitor Your Frustration: Use a simple frustration scale to keep tabs on how learners are feeling and why. I use one that looks similar to a hospital pain scale, and I ask students to track their frustration levels several times throughout a day's lesson. When I ask them to reflect on this data, I always learn a lot.

Cool Review: Ask your students to shoot you an email, a text, or a handwritten review of your instruction that day. Make it clear that you want to know what you can do better.

Flashback: When the day's learning should remind students of something they learned previously, challenge them to frame out a flashback by making clear comparisons and providing a reason why.

Show Me You Know It: Challenge students to complete just one task that proves they know what you taught them that day.

Shoot Your Data: Invite students to review the day's work and take three photos using their cell phones: one that reflects the best learning they accomplished that day, one that reflects the highest moment of frustration, and one that reflects another moment of their own choosing. They may text these to you, archive them in a space that you create, or establish their own album to expand upon over time.

Record Your Reflection: When you ask [reflective questions](#), ask students to video tape their responses rather than writing them. This is a time saver, and it allows learners to focus more on reflecting than on producing perfect written pieces for critical eyes.

Headings and Subheadings: Provide learners with sticky notes, and ask them to create a headline for an article about the day's learning. Require them to post their headlines on the board as they leave the classroom that day. When they return the next day, warm up by reviewing the ideas shared and if necessary, debating a bit in order to choose the most appropriate heading. As learning continues, challenge them to check out of class by sharing subheadings. Build your class article over the course of several days or weeks, as learning deepens (okay, so this will take more than 30 seconds, but it's one of my favorites, so forgive me).

Four Corner Feedback: Post four posters, one in each corner of your room: I'M CONFUSED/I'M CURIOUS/I'M QUESTIONING/I'M CLEAR. Ask students to reflect on the day's learning. Are they confused about something? Curious about some aspect of what you are studying that was not discussed? Questioning what was learned or even

disagreeing with points shared? Clear and ready to move on to the next phase? Once they know what they're thinking, they should visit one corner of their choice on the way out the door. When they arrive, they must leave a note on the poster that explains their thinking.

Analogies: Invite learners to create an analogy for some aspect of the day's learning. They should share these in an open Google Doc, where they can see how others respond and push their peers' thinking.

Red Flags: If the lesson included the production of notes or other products, ask students to review the work they created and place red flags on areas that reflect where greater clarity or reteaching is necessary. Consider using colored sticky notes, dots, or red pens or markers.

Collaborate, Cluster, Categorize: Provide learners ten slips of paper or sticky notes. Ask each learner to brainstorm ten things learned during the day's lesson in thirty seconds or less, placing one item on each note. As a warm up the next day, challenge students to form teams and spill their notes into a shared space. Once all notes are visible, the team should work to cluster the notes and then categorize them.

Plus/Delta: What's working, helping, clicking, sticking? What needs to change? Ask learners to reflect on these questions, and ask them to add their thoughts to a plus/delta chart like the one featured in the photo above.

So, how do teachers use what they learn about students from these assessments to speak with parents or other educators about their strengths and struggles?

Deepening their documentation practices becomes a critical next step. Please drop by again this week. More on that to come!

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A former English teacher, Angela Stockman is the founder of the WNY Young Writer's Studio, a community of writers and teachers of writing in Buffalo, New York. She is also an education consultant with expertise in curriculum design, instructional coaching, and assessment. Read more from Angela at Angelastockman.com.

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